IN THE CLAIMS:

Please place claims 1-9 in the form indicated below:

Claims 1 and 2 (canceled)

3. (Currently amended) A method of selling and purchasing at least one object of

purchase over a computer network, said method comprising the following steps:

  a. utilizing a software program on a computer of a purchaser to search for and

find a site on said computer network offering said at least one object of purchase;

  b. browsing through an on-line catalog at said site to find said at least one object

of purchase, each of said at least one object of purchase having attributed to it a probability of

obtaining said each of said at least one object of purchase at no cost to said purchaser,

wherein said probability is communicated to the purchaser prior to selecting said at least one

object for purchase;

  c. selecting said at least one object of purchase for purchase;

  d. confirming an order for said at least one object of purchase;

  e. determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one

object of purchase; and

  f. paying for only those objects of purchase from said at least one object of

purchase for which payment was determined to be required in step e,

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wherein said step of determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase comprises the following steps:

(1) [a.]   generating a random number between a first predetermined value and a second predetermined value for said each of said at least one object of purchase;

a.   ~~generating a random number between a first predetermined value and a second predetermined value for said each of said at least one object of purchase;~~

(2) [b.]   offering said each of said at least one object of purchase to said purchaser at no cost if said random number is equal to a third predetermined value; and

(3) [c.]   requiring payment for said each of said at least one object of purchase if said random number is not equal to said third predetermined value.

4. (Currently amended) A method of selling and purchasing at least one object of purchase over a computer network, said method comprising the following steps:

a.   utilizing a software program on a computer of a purchaser to search for and find a site on said computer network offering said at least one object of purchase;

b.   browsing through an on-line catalog at said site to find said at least one object of purchase, each of said at least one object of purchase having attributed to it a probability of obtaining said each of said at least one object of purchase at no cost to said purchaser,

wherein said probability is communicated to the purchaser prior to selecting said at least one object for purchase;

    c.   selecting said at least one object of purchase for purchase;

    d.   confirming an order for said at least one object of purchase;

    e.   determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

    f.   paying for only those objects of purchase from said at least one object of purchase for which payment was determined to be required in step e,

    wherein said step of determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one object of purchase comprises the following steps:

    (1) [a.]   determining a series of whole numbers for said each of said at least one object of purchase after a first event selected from the group of events consisting of:

    (i)   said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

    (ii)   a first predetermined number of said each of said at least one object of purchase have been ordered after a second event selected from the group of events consisting of:

    (a)   said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

(b)   determining a series of whole numbers as specified in this step 1.

[a.], said series of whole numbers being between one and said

first predetermined number,

said series of whole numbers having as many numbers as the integral

part of the quotient of said first predetermined number divided by a

second predetermined number;

(2) [b.]   offering said each of said at least one object of purchase to said

purchaser at no cost if the number of said each of said at least one

object of purchase ordered since step (1) [a.] was last performed is

equal to one of said series of whole numbers; and

(3) [c.]   requiring payment for said each of said at least one object of purchase if

said number of said each of said at least one object of purchase ordered

since step (1) [a.] was last performed is not equal to any of said series

of whole numbers.

5. (Currently amended) A method of selling and purchasing at least one object of

purchase over a computer network, said method comprising the following steps:

a.   utilizing a software program on a computer of a purchaser to search for and

find a site on said computer network offering said at least one object of purchase;

b.   browsing through an on-line catalog at said site to find said at least one object

of purchase, each of said at least one object of purchase having attributed to it a probability of

obtaining said each of said at least one object of purchase at no cost to said purchaser,

wherein said probability is communicated to the purchaser prior to selecting said at least one

object for purchase;

c.   selecting said at least one object of purchase for purchase;

d.   confirming an order for said at least one object of purchase;

e.   determining whether payment must be made for said each of said at least one

object of purchase; and

f.   paying for only those objects of purchase from said at least one object of

purchase for which payment was determined to be required in step e,

wherein said step of determining whether payment must be made for said each of said

at least one object of purchase comprises the following steps:

(1) [a.]   determining a series of [or] whole numbers for said each of said at least

one object of purchase after a first event selected from the group of

events consisting of:

(i)   said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at least one

object of purchase; and

(ii)   a first predetermined number of said each of said at least one object of

purchase have been ordered after a second event selected from the group

of events consisting of:

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(a)   said site is ready to sell for the first time said each of said at least one object of purchase; and

(b)   determining a series of whole numbers as specified in this step (1) [a.], said series of whole numbers being between one and said first predetermined number,

said series of whole numbers having as many numbers as the integral part of the quotient of said first predetermined number divided by a second predetermined number;

(2) [b.]   generating a random number between zero and a first number of said each of said at least one object of purchase that must be ordered in the future for a second number of said each of said at least one object of purchase ordered since step (1) [a.] was last performed to equal the least of said series of whole numbers which is greater than a fourth number of said each of said at least one object of purchase actually ordered since step (1) [a.] was last performed, said generation of said random number being performed for said each of said at least one object of purchase;

(3) [c.]   offering said each of said at least one object of purchase to said purchaser at no cost if said random number is equal to zero; and

(4) [d.]   requiring payment for said each of said at least one object of purchase is said random number is not equal to zero.

Claims 6 and 7 (canceled)

8. (Currently amended)   A system for selling at least one object of purchase over a computer network, said system comprising:

    a.   an on-line catalog;

    b.   a virtual shopping basket; and

    c.   software for determining whether a particular one of said at least one object of purchase shall be offered free to a purchaser,

wherein said software comprises:

    (1) [a.]   a program to produce a user interface allowing a merchant to select one of at least one algorithm for determining whether a particular one of said at least one object of purchase shall be offered free to said purchaser, said selection being with regard to one object of purchase in said on-line catalog and said at least one algorithm comprising a regular cycle algorithm, a constant probability algorithm, a pre-defined list algorithm and a dynamic probability algorithm, wherein said software communicates to said purchaser a probability that said particular said object of purchase will be offered free to said purchaser prior to selection by said purchaser of said at least one object for purchase;

    (2) [b.]   said at least one algorithm; and

(3) [c.]   a program to produce a user interface displaying to a merchant

the particular one(s) of said one object of purchase in said on-

line catalog offered free to purchasers.

Claim 9 (canceled)